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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4775  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4404

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: TBIO KFLU KSCA SOCI PREL WHO NP  
SUBJECT: NEPAL: AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

REFS: A. KATHMANDU 927  
B. KATHMANDU 744  
c. KATHMANDU 115971  
D. KATHMANDU 1377  
E. KATHMANDU 486

SUMMARY

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¶1. (SBU) On September 13, the DCM chaired a meeting of Post's avian influenza working group. There have still been no confirmed human or bird cases of avian influenza (AI) in Nepal. The Embassy website is updated with the latest AI fact sheet and the country team has distributed pandemic influenza Video Compact Discs (VCD). The government of Nepal (GON) recently submitted its final operational plan to the World Bank (WB) for approximately USD 15 million in AI program funding over three years. This should lead to final discussions on WB funding for AI preparedness in Nepal. Other USAID funding for AI preparedness is being used for surveillance activities.

NO AI HUMAN OR BIRD CASES REPORTED

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¶2. (SBU) On September 13 the DCM chaired a meeting of Post's avian influenza working group, which noted that there have still been no confirmed human or bird cases of avian influenza (AI) in Nepal. The Ministry of Agriculture has investigated several suspected AI outbreaks in birds over the past few months and determined none of them to be AI.

LATEST ON MISSION/AMCIT PREPARATION

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¶3. (SBU) Medoff observed that the latest State avian influenza fact sheet was clear that the Department would not provide Tamiflu to Amcits (ref C). Conoff noted that the new fact sheet was on the Embassy website. He added that Post was not planning a town hall on AI at this time to avoid creating unwanted panic.

¶4. (SBU) Post recently received 70 copies of the "Being Prepared for Pandemic Influenza" VCD and the country team distributed it to Mission employees. This VCD is not copyrighted and is being reproduced at Post to be made available to Amcits at the consular section.

¶5. (SBU) Post's health unit has received its shipment of

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to use in the event of an outbreak and is storing it in pre-positioned strategic locations.

WORLD BANK RECEIVES GON FINAL OPERATIONAL PLAN

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¶6. (SBU) Plans for World Bank (WB) funding remain at the "pre-appraisal" mission (team) stage (ref D). The Government of Nepal (GON) submitted a final version of its operational plan on AI to the WB during the week of September 4. The plan is largely based on the GON's AI preparedness plan that the former royal cabinet approved in March 2006 (ref B). The WB is planning to fund approximately USD 15 million for AI over three years. The funds are to be used for activities covering human and animal health sides of AI, to include surveillance, communications, laboratory infrastructure, and a compensation system for culled poultry. Further negotiations between the GON and the WB are expected during the coming weeks with an eye toward having WB money available sooner than later.

OTHER AI PREPAREDNESS UPDATES

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¶7. (SBU) Post received rapid test kits in July to participate in the cooperative project with the health unit of Embassy Bangkok and the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Science (AFRIMS) in Bangkok to do laboratory diagnostic testing of samples from human patients in Nepal who exhibit flu-like symptoms (ref D). USAID reports that the rapid test kits have limited accuracy.

¶8. (SBU) FAO Nepal received USD 215,000 in USAID funds for the GON's bird surveillance capabilities in July (ref A). The World Health Organization (WHO) Nepal received USD 100,000 from USAID in July for development of a surveillance system for Nepali health services to detect human AI cases should they occur (ref E).

¶9. (SBU) Emboff recently raised with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Nepal and USAID the need for funding for the GON to develop a mechanism to do surveillance for small "backyard" poultry producers, which are quite common in Nepal. Emboff noted that it took two years for the government of Indonesia to develop proper surveillance mechanisms after it realized that most of its human AI cases were coming from backyard farms, not large commercial poultry operations.

¶10. (SBU) USAID funded training for AI human preparedness for the GON's Rapid Response Teams in late August.

¶11. (SBU) Of the 2,000 sets of PPE the Ministry of Agriculture requested in April 2006 from USAID/Nepal, a total of 1,500 units of PPE have arrived to date (ref D).

COMMENT

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¶12. (SBU) Post will continue to hold monthly meetings of its AI working group. We will monitor and seek opportunities to guide and assist the GON in their AI preparedness activities.

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